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Bangalore Mirror

TEMP Max 26 | Min 13 | Humidity 32% Plenty of sunshine Sensex 81,903 | Nifty 25,157 | Gold 1,54,599 | Silver 3,21,120 | Dollar 91.59 | Euro 107.28 | GBP 123.09

FOREIGN HAND

Over last two years, 72 foreign nationals arrested in 134 drug cases across state, with a majority in Bengaluru

PAGE 3

LATE TRAIN

Completion timeline for suburban rail network extended to March 2030, pushing project back by over 3 years from its earlier target

PAGE 5

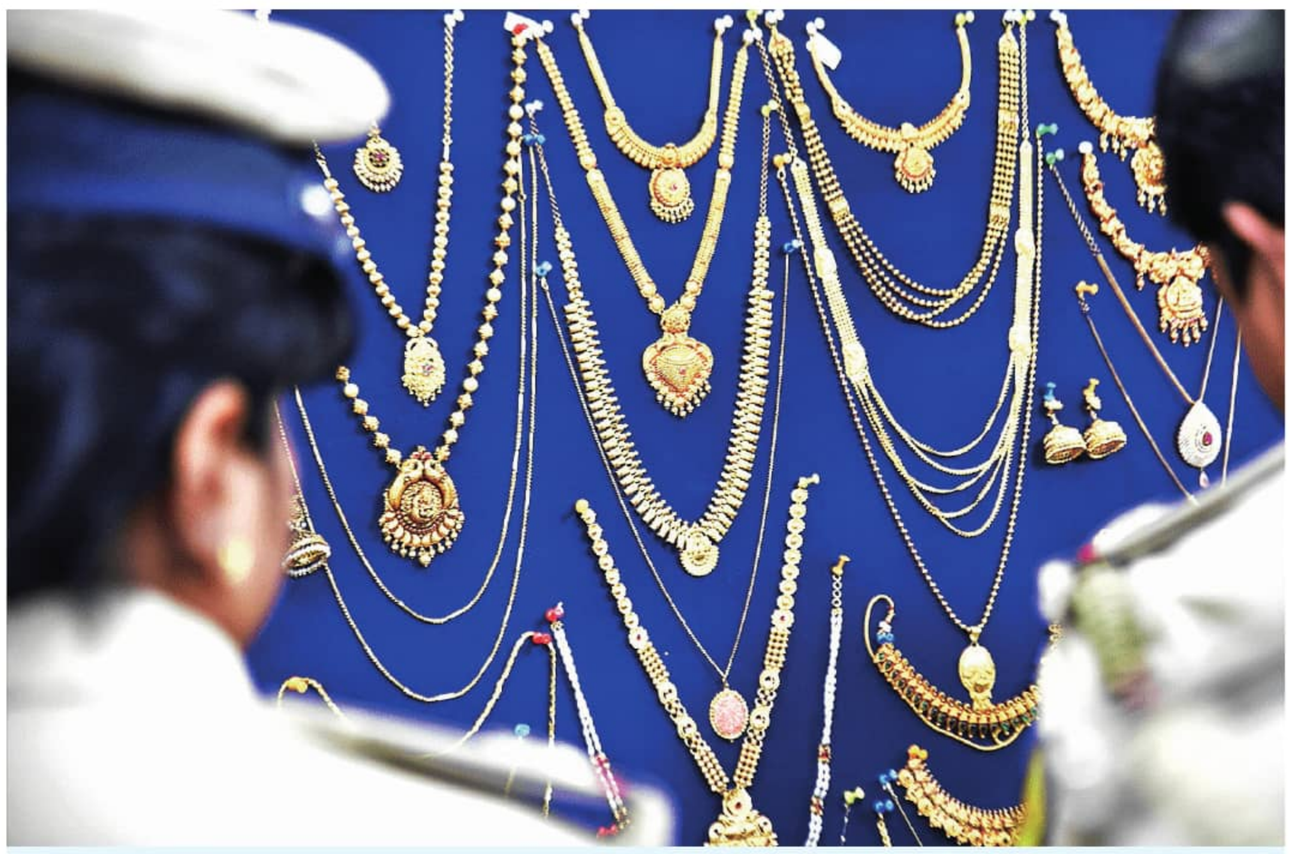
As snatching incidents dip in state, police say most such crimes registered as robbery cases; if items less valuable than gold chain such as phone or bag are snatched, cases recorded under another section and these cases are on the rise

SNATCH & SCOOT

In June 2016, Bengaluru police became first in K'taka to treat chain snatching as robbery

Sanjana CS
c-sanjana.s@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR



Street crime patterns in the city are witnessing a noticeable shift, with mobile phone and bag snatching incidents now outpacing chain snatching cases, Police data shows that snatching cases have doubled last year compared to 2024 meanwhile chain snatching and robbery cases have come down in Karnataka.

According to Karnataka State Police data, across the entire state, snatching cases have risen sharply over the past two years. Karnataka recorded 0 cases in 2023, which climbed to 228 cases in 2024 and further surged to 539 cases in 2025. This shows an increase of 311 cases from 2024 to 2025 incidents have more than doubled within a single year which also can be translated as on a daily average across the state sees about one or two cases per day in 2025.

Meanwhile, chain-snatching incidents have shown a steady decline. In 2023, as many as 631 cases were reported, which dipped slightly to 603 in 2024. The number fell more sharply thereafter, dropping to 451 cases. Similarly, robbery cases have also shown a steady decline in 48.6%. While 1,169 cases were reported in 2023, the number fell to 940 in 2024 and further dropped to 601 in 2025.

A senior police official explained,"Both the cases such

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

"Offenders find it easier to grab a phone from a pedestrian or two-wheeler rider than forcibly snatch gold chains, which often involves greater resistance and involves weapons due to resistance

—Police official

Lake story, not so pretty

Citizens, lake activists punch holes in govt report stating Kembathalli Lake rejuvenation is complete success

Garima Prasher
garima.prasher@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

A recent report submitted by the state government to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has stated that comprehensive development of Kembathalli Lake in South Bengaluru has been taken up, and the water body is well maintained. But lake-walkers have disputed many claims made in the report.

Addressing the issue of encroachment by a burial ground, the report has underlined that an alternate land has already been identified and allocated for the burial ground that had encroached upon more than one acre of lake area. Moreover, at present, the disputed burial ground in the lake bed area for the cremation of dead bodies in the lake premises is not in use.

The government has further informed that the rejuvenation of the lake is complete. The work with respect to the walking track on the Lake bund is also wrapped up, along with the fencing around the lake. At present, there is no sewage entry.

"Comprehensive development of Kembathalli Lake has been taken up by BBMP. Diversion drain work for restricting sewage entry to the lake in dry weather

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

THINGS TO DO

01 Echoes of unity

The Indian Music Experience Museum (IME) is celebrating India's 76th Republic Day with a musical concert 'Rang Aman Ke' performed by Mumbai-based Indian folk band and theatre collective Yalgaar Lok Sanskriti Manch.
Where: Indian Music Experience Museum, JP Nagar;
When: January 23, 7 pm

02 Lit journey

Atta Galatta is hosting the launch of 'Chaos in a Coupe: Travelling across India with Three Dogs' by Divya Dugar. The book is a witty, whimsical, wry account of travels, accompanied by photographs.
Where: Atta Galatta, Indiranagar;
When: January 25, 12.30 pm

03 Raga and roll

Windmills presents a two night live performance by Aditya Prakash Ensemble, working at the intersection of raga, improvisation, chamber music, and experimental song, drawing from Carnatic traditions while also engaging with jazz, folk, and contemporary forms.
Where: Windmills Craftworks, Whitefield;
When: January 23 and 24

04 Stage spectacle

Pratibimb Theatre Company brings its play God's Lioness to Bengaluru this January after shows in Delhi and Gurugram. The 80-minute production retells the story of Mahabharata from Draupadi's perspective, focusing on choice and inner conflict.
Where: Ranga Shankara on Jan 23, Jagriti Theatre on Jan 24 & MAHE on Jan 29

05 Tech intersection

FICCI FLO, India's leading women-led chamber of commerce, has announced AI INDIA 2026 – Led by Women. The landmark national artificial intelligence conclave will bring together women leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals, and senior executives from 21 FLO chapters across India.
Where: ITC Gardenia, Ashok Nagar;
When: January 22, 10 am

Sustainability gains through innovative sanitation efforts

School puts in bio-toilets that rely on natural anaerobic digestion and ground-based treatment, using significantly less water compared to conventional flush toilets

Iffath Fathima
iffath.fathima
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMirror

A city school has demonstrated how decentralised sanitation solutions can deliver tangible water conservation outcomes. By installing eco-friendly, water-saving portable toilets based on bio-digester technology, the institution has significantly reduced its daily water consumption while also lowering its environmental footprint.

The initiative has been implemented at The Green School Bangalore (TGSB), where four Re-Leaf Bio Toilets have been installed outdoors for use by support staff, including drivers, housekeeping personnel and security guards. Unlike conventional flush toilets that consume between 6 and 10 litres of water per use, these bio-toilets operate with negligible water, relying instead on natural anaerobic digestion and ground-based treatment.

Usha Iyer, Founder and Principal of The Green School Bangalore, said that water conservation is not just a concept taught in classrooms, but is something actively practised on campus. "By adopting bio-toilets, we have been able to drastically cut water use while ensuring hygienic sanitation for our staff. Education, we believe, must lead by example when it comes to caring for the planet," said Iyer.

The water-saving impact is considerable. A conventional flush toilet uses about six litres per flush. For a single toilet used by around 40 people a day, assuming two flushes per user, daily water consumption reaches nearly 480 litres. Over a year, this amounts to approximately 1.75 lakh litres of freshwater. In contrast, the Re-Leaf toilet uses only 0.5 to one litre per use, bringing annual water consumption down to about 14,600 litres for the same number of users. This results in water savings of over 1.6 lakh litres per toilet every year. With multiple units installed across the campus, the cumulative conservation runs into several lakh litres annually.

Re-Leaf Bio Toilets installed at school premises

Beyond conserving water, system eases pressure on municipal sewage, lowers groundwater contamination risks, avoids chemicals, electricity and heavy materials to cut carbon footprint and requires only minimal maintenance

The toilets have been installed near work zones used by housekeeping staff, security personnel, gardeners, drivers and other maintenance workers who spend most of their day outdoors. School officials say the decision was practical rather than exclusionary, as indoor facilities already serve students and teaching staff.

Each unit is designed to comfortably support 40 to 50 users per day while maintaining hygiene standards. "The school has placed the toilets close to outdoor work areas to reduce the need for staff to travel long distances for sanitation access. The toilets are meant to supplement existing indoor facilities, not replace them. Plans are underway to install additional units near sports grounds and play areas, where temporary yet sustainable sanitation is required without disturbing green spaces," said Iyer.

Beyond water conservation, the system offers several environmental advantages. Iyer pointed out that by treating waste on site, it reduces the load on municipal sewage infrastructure and lowers the risk of groundwater contamination. "The absence of chemical cleaning agents, electricity and heavy construction materials further reduces the system's carbon footprint. Maintenance requirements are minimal, with daily cleaning handled by trained staff and desludging required only once every two to three years. Structurally, the units are designed to last up to two decades," she added.

QR codes on medicines to aid visually impaired

Medicines in India could soon carry QR codes to help visually impaired users access critical information, with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao saying a proposal will be sent to the Centre shortly. "This system is already being used in Japan, and studies done with Japanese agencies and JSS University show it can work well here too," he said. The state government will examine making QR codes mandatory and hold discussions with pharmaceutical companies. "This will not add a major cost burden. If companies are willing, the government will support the initiative," the minister said. A survey across four southern states covering 513 visually impaired persons found that 485 use smartphones and are comfortable accessing information through QR codes. Japanese representatives said several companies in their country already use QR codes voluntarily to share detailed medicine information, even though it is not mandatory. **–BMB**

SSLC preparatory exams: Department tightens rules

In the wake of a question paper leak during SSLC Preparatory Examination-1, the School Education Department has tightened norms for the remaining two preparatory exams, issuing a fresh set of guidelines to prevent any recurrence. The department has shifted responsibility for conducting the exams to the School Education Commissioner, with DDPI and BEO officials tasked with monitoring centres closely. Use of mobile phones by both teachers and students during exam hours has been strictly prohibited.

As per the guidelines, headmasters must download and print question papers only on the day of the exam and maintain complete confidentiality. Students must report to school by 9 am, with question papers downloaded and printed by 9.30 am. Packing will be completed by 10.30 am, and the sealed packets will be opened in the presence of students at 11 am, when the exam begins. DIET principals will conduct surprise inspections to ensure compliance, officials said. **–BMB**

KEA pushes online certificates for CET

With the CET 2026 application process underway, the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has urged the School Education Department to issue Kannada medium and rural study certificates through the Seva Sindhu portal to speed up admissions and cut delays. At present, students have to physically approach BEO offices and PU colleges for verification of these certificates, a process that often slows down seat allotment. "Online issuance will make document verification quicker and more efficient," KEA officials said, adding that linking certificates to a permanent RD number would allow their use across multiple admission and recruitment processes.

KEA has also requested that mother tongue certificates, including Telugu, Tulu, Tamil and Kodava, be issued through Seva Sindhu, bringing more services under the digital umbrella and easing the burden on students. **–BMB**

72 foreign nationals arrested in 134 drug cases over two years

Authorities intensify monitoring, deportations, and awareness campaigns targeting illegal foreign residents involved in drug offences

| Sridhar.Vivan
@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

Police have arrested a foreign national for the third time in connection with drug peddling and have seized drugs valued at ₹5.15 crore. However, this is not an isolated case, as over the past two years a total of 134 drug-related cases involving foreign nationals have been detected in Karnataka, the majority in Bengaluru. In 2023, authorities registered 83 cases for possession, five for sales, and 77 under other drug-related offences. In 2024, 45 possession cases were reported, with no recorded instances of sales. As of February 2025, six possession cases have already been detected.

Law enforcement has also arrested 172 foreign nationals in connection with drug offences during this period. In 2023, 101 individuals were arrested for possession and eight for sales, totalling 109. In 2024, 63 foreign nationals were arrested, all for possession. By February 2025, authorities had already made eight arrests.

Government cracks down on foreign drug peddlers

During a recent reply in the Legislative Council, Home Minister G Parameshwara said: "The government has intensified efforts to curb drug trafficking by foreign nationals residing illegally in the state. Several measures have been implemented, including legal action, deportation, and increased surveillance. Under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, repeated offenders have been detained—five in 2023, four in 2024, and two in 2025. Deportation procedures have also been expedited through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) to remove illegal residents involved in drug-related crimes."

Karnataka law enforcement targets illicit drug trade among foreigners. Public awareness programmes, legal action, and ₹5.15 crore in seized narcotics mark aggressive crackdown

He added that a toll-free helpline (1908) has been launched, allowing citizens to report drug peddlers. Public awareness campaigns, including rallies and meetings, are being held in areas with a high concentration of foreign nationals. Schools and colleges are also being targeted with awareness programmes to educate students, particularly foreign students, on the dangers of drug abuse.

"Law enforcement agencies have intensified monitoring at public places, including schools, colleges, bars, restaurants, and dance bars, to prevent drug sales. Regular meetings at police stations are being conducted to educate foreign nationals on the strict legal consequences of drug offences.

Additionally, Karnataka Police are working closely with agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Customs, Railways, and the Education Department to dismantle drug networks. Authorities are also tracking drug supply chains, seizing passports of arrested foreign nationals, and initiating legal proceedings.

Police stations maintain updated records of foreign residents, while intelligence agencies conduct covert operations to gather information on those involved in drug trafficking," Parameshwara added.

Laughing at gods backfires

The Karnataka High Court has strongly criticised a television channel for the manner in which Hindu deities were portrayed in a popular Kannada comedy programme, observing that content cannot be justified merely by invoking the right to freedom of speech.

Hearing the matter, Justice M Nagaprasanna expressed concern over scenes from the show that featured characters resembling figures from Hindu mythology. The court remarked that humour and satire have limits and cannot be used as a shield to mock or trivialise religious beliefs. It questioned whether anything could be shown in the name of entertainment without regard for the sentiments of devotees. The case arose from a complaint alleging that an episode of the programme contained objectionable depictions of revered mythological characters, which hurt religious sentiments.

The High Court said the visuals were disturbing and stressed responsible creative expression, particularly on matters of faith. While the channel argued the skit was fictional, non-offensive and meant as light entertainment, and flagged procedural lapses in the case, the court granted interim protection from coercive action but allowed the investigation to continue. **BMB**

Divided over ballot papers

The State Election Commission's decision to use ballot papers instead of electronic voting machines for elections to five civic bodies under the Greater Bengaluru Authority has triggered a mixed response, with citizen groups divided over whether the move is a step back or a necessary safeguard.

Several residents and civic activists have questioned the sudden shift, saying EVMs have helped ensure transparency and ease of voting.

"When voters have accepted EVMs, the focus should be on fixing loopholes, not abandoning the system altogether. It feels like moving from computers back to manual registers," said a city-based social activist.

Critics also fear that ballot voting could revive malpractices such as booth capturing, proxy voting and ballot tampering, especially in densely populated wards.

Supporters of the move say the law permits ballot papers and note that countries like the US and Germany still use them, citing unresolved concerns over EVMs and VVPATs.

Critics, however, warn of higher invalid votes and disputes, and with the commission yet to explain the switch, the debate is set to continue. **BMB**

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Date: 16.01.2026
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Guardrails off, Pottery Road footpath left in shambles

Despite CSR upgrades, railway works and poor coordination have left Cooke Town and Pottery Road pedestrians navigating damaged, unsafe footpaths daily

Residents demand urgent action as removed safety railings remain unsecured, leaving the footpath vulnerable to further damage and possible theft

Residents accuse South Western Railway and Bruhat Bengaluru City Corporation of apathy after railway works damaged an ITC Limited-built footpath, with safety railings removed and yet to be restored

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Residents of Cooke Town and Pottery Road have been waiting for six months expecting the authorities concerned to fix the footpath problems for the benefit of pedestrians but in vain.

Despite repeated reminders highlighting the urgency of the issue, residents allege that the authorities have remained apathetic, allowing the condition of the footpath to deteriorate steadily. According to them, the footpath on Pottery Road was recently upgraded under a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative by ITC Limited, an Indian multinational conglomerate, before South Western Railway undertook development works in the area.

Residents complain that during the railway's construction activity, the contractor not only damaged the newly laid footpath but also removed several steel railings that had been installed to ensure pedestrian safety. They point out that the lack of coordination between agencies has undone months of civic improvement work meant for public use.

Bangalore Mirror had earlier highlighted the issue in a report titled Residents slam BBMP, railways over footpath neglect, damage, published on July 18, 2025. The report detailed how poor coordination between South Western Railway and BCCC authorities resulted in damage to the CSR-funded footpath, leaving pedestrians at risk.

Coming down heavily on the authorities responsible, Albert R, founder member of the Cooke Town Residents' Association and advisor to Bengaluru Eshanya Mahavedike, said the railway authorities must take responsibility for restoring the footpath and reinstalling the steel railings removed during the construction of a concrete retaining wall. He alleged that the contractor dismantled and damaged the railings, which are now lying along the retaining wall.

"I want the railway authorities to direct the contractor to reinstall the steel railings immediately, before miscreants or thieves lay their hands on them. I do not understand what is preventing the authorities from acting," Albert said. He stressed that since the footpath was developed by ITC Limited for public benefit, it must be protected and restored without delay.

Echoing similar concerns, another resident, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the need of the hour is to restore the footpath before its condition worsens further. The resident added that unattended steel railings are vulnerable to theft and that recovering them later would be difficult. "It is also the responsibility of the jurisdictional police to alert the railway or BCCC authorities, as missing railings would pose both safety and law-and-order challenges," the resident said.

When contacted, South Western Railway engineer Venugopal said he was aware of the issue. "The developmental works are in progress. We will fix the footpath and reinstall the steel railings soon," he said.

However, residents insist that with the construction of the concrete retaining wall already completed, there is no justification for further delay. For now, they say, pedestrians can only wait and watch to see if the assurances translate into action.

Dasanapura to host new livestock hub

Bengaluru's outskirts are set to gain a dedicated livestock trading hub with the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) finalising plans for a sheep and goat market at Dasanapura on Tumakuru Road. The proposed facility will be developed on 12.5 acres of vacant BMTC land adjoining the existing APMC yard, for which government approval has already been sought. Officials note that the land, unsuitable for BMTC operations due to inadequate road infrastructure, is well-suited for a livestock market. Shifting the facility outside the city is expected to ease transportation hurdles faced by breeders and traders.

The initiative comes amid a steady rise in sheep and goat rearing and growing meat consumption in Bengaluru, where prices range between ₹700 and ₹850 per kg. Despite daily transactions running into crores, the city lacks a permanent livestock market, relying largely on seasonal sales during Ramzan and Ugadi. Announced in the 2024–25 Budget, the new market will feature scientific infrastructure such as internal roads, lighting, water supply, toilets and a farmer bhavan, bringing greater efficiency and order to this fast-growing agri-based sector. Additionally, officials expect the organised facility to improve animal welfare standards, ensure transparent pricing, and reduce congestion associated with informal livestock trading practices.

–BMB

Hebbal loop smooths flyover, chokes exit

The opening of the second loop ramp at Hebbal has improved movement on the flyover but shifted congestion to exit points, leaving commuters stuck for hours during peak periods. While vehicles move smoothly on the elevated stretch, traffic piles up near the CBI junction and the Baptist Hospital stretch, where buses struggle to halt and pedestrians find it nearly impossible to cross. The situation worsens towards Ganganagar and Mekhri Circle, as left and right turns choke the junction, leading to long vehicle queues.

Traffic officials estimate that more than 50,000 vehicles pass through the corridor every hour during peak times. Although average travel speeds have increased since the loop ramps opened, even a minor vehicle breakdown can trigger massive snarls, disrupting routes towards the airport, Palace Guttahalli and Jakkur. Residents blame inadequate planning and the absence of parallel roads. Many argue that without a new flyover or an alternative corridor towards Mekhri Circle, congestion will persist for years. The long-pending multi-modal transport hub proposal at Hebbal also remains stalled, adding to commuter frustration. Until comprehensive planning, traffic enforcement, pedestrian infrastructure, and public transport integration improve, daily bottlenecks will continue undermining safety and productivity.

–BMB

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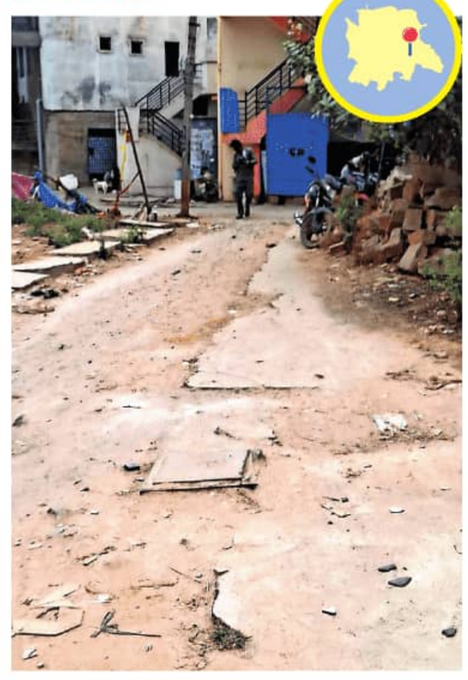

Road at 1st Cross, Water Tank Road, is obstructed by stones and a telecom pole; only a BESCOM pole was removed, highlighting BBMP's negligence despite GBA claims.

Delay in repairs
D'Souza Road

Road repair at D'Souza Road, Ward 111 (new Ward 14), pending since June 2025, inconveniencing residents severly.

Post-festival clutter
Jayanagar

Main roads and footpaths in 9th Block Flower Market are strewn with sugarcane and unsold vegetables after festivals, leading to obstruction and poor walkability.

Home completion promises clash with lingering delays

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Homebuyers, particularly from middle-class families, appear increasingly vulnerable to exploitation not just by builders but also by interior designers. One such family, promised that their dream home's interiors would be completed within 45 days, has been allegedly forced to remain in a rented house for six months, unable to move in due to prolonged delays in the design work.

L Mohan, Vinod Kumar, and Jayanti M lodged a complaint with KR Puram police against M/s Homecrafts, M/s Angalee Homecrafts LLP for not completing the interior décor work since the last six months. The complaint, dated January 13, 2026, stated that a person named Yashwant approached the family in April 2025 to enter into an interior design and execution contract. The agreement was finalised at the Homecraft office in KR Puram in May 2025. As demanded by the Homecraft staff, the family paid a token advance of Rs 15,000 on May 25, followed by subsequent payments according to the prescribed schedule.

The complaint stated that acting in good faith, payments were made even before the corresponding stages of work were completed, trusting the accused. "The total work was to be completed in 45 days, before July 15, 2025. However, despite receiving almost the entire consideration amount, the accused failed to complete the work, and even as on date, more than 30 per cent of the interior work remains incomplete," the complaint read.

Speaking with Bangalore Mirror, Vinod Kumar said that his father L Mohan, who is a senior citizen, visited the organisation's office in KR Puram as they did not respond to phone calls. He said that the family has been staying at a rented home (costing Rs 25,000 per month) for the last six months due to the delay in completion of the interior décor work. "My father is the one who paid the money for the entire project and they hurt our sentiments by sending such an insensitive legal notice. This is how they care for their customers," said Kumar.

Family alleges delay in completion of home interior, while company cries reputational harm, claims work is almost finished

In a response to Vinod Kumar's plan to highlight the issue on social media, M/s Angalee Homecrafts LLP sent a legal notice dated January 9, 2026.

"At the outset, it is placed on record that your communication contains explicit threats of reputational harm, social media campaigns, and public disparagement unless unlawful monetary demands are met. Such statements amount to coercion, criminal intimidation, and a direct threat to brand and business reputation, which are noted on record," the legal notice read.

When contacted, Chetan CS, Project Manager, Homecrafts, said that only 10 per cent of décor work is pending. "We will complete the remaining work. We are planning to send our team to the flat tomorrow. I have discussed it with Vinod Kumar and Jayanti," he said. —BMB

B'luru suburban rail project faces over three-year delay

Deadline for network is pushed to 2030, with officials citing land acquisition bottlenecks, slow civil works and complications in procuring train coaches as reasons for delay

Commuter representatives have voiced disappointment over repeated deadline extensions for project

Bangalore Mirror Bureau
mybangaloremirror
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The completion timeline for Bengaluru's long-awaited suburban rail network has been extended to March 2030, pushing the project back by more than three years from its earlier target of October 2026. The revised deadline reflects significant delays in executing one of the city's most important urban transport initiatives.

The 148-km suburban rail project, approved in 2020 to ease traffic congestion and improve regional connectivity, has faced multiple implementation challenges. During a recent high-level review meeting, the updated progress of the project was discussed, and concerns were raised over the slow pace of work.

As per the new schedule, different corridors will be completed in phases. The Mallige Line between Benniganahalli and Chikkabanavara is expected to be ready by December 2028, while the Kanaka Line, running from Heelalige to Rajanakunte, has been rescheduled for June 2029. The remaining two corridors — the Sampige Line, connecting KSR Bengaluru City to Devanahalli via Yelahanka, and the Parijata Line, linking Kengeri and Whitefield — are now planned for completion by March 2030.

The project is currently running approximately 41 months behind schedule. When construction was formally launched in 2022, authorities had committed to completing the entire network within about 40 months, including the crucial airport-bound corridor.

Officials attributed the delays to a combination of issues such as land acquisition bottlenecks, slow progress on civil works, and complications in procuring train coaches. Plans to lease rolling stock failed due to lack of response from bidders, prompting a shift towards purchasing air-conditioned coaches, a move expected to further extend timelines.

The airport corridor also faced setbacks earlier due to alignment and funding concerns, especially since it overlaps with an existing metro route. However, a revised alignment for this stretch has now been cleared, which could help move construction forward.

Commuter representatives voiced disappointment over the repeated deadline extensions. "People living on the city's outskirts were counting on suburban rail to cut travel time and costs. Each delay means another few years of struggling with congested roads," said a member of a commuter collective.

Urban mobility analysts stressed that the project remains crucial despite the setbacks. "Bengaluru's growth demands a strong regional rail system. The focus now should be on strict milestone monitoring and faster decision-making to avoid further slippage," an urban transport expert said.

City's growth demands strong regional rail system, focus now should be on strict milestone monitoring and faster decision-making to avoid further slippage, says urban transport expert

Forest Department pursues action over illegal tree felling

Following a complaint filed by the forest cell of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), the Karnataka Forest Department (KFD) has filed an FIR against the Embassy East Business Park Private Limited for illegal felling of sandalwood trees.

According to Ravindra Kumar, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Bengaluru Urban, Karnataka Forest Department, a case has been registered and an enquiry is currently underway.

"Embassy East Business Park Private Limited had permission from GBA (erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) in 2020 to cut 42 trees; however, they have gone on to fell more than a hundred trees. These also include sandalwood trees. However, clarity on the number of sandalwood trees felled can be obtained only after the inquiry is completed," said Kumar.

Notably, in Karnataka, the illegal felling of sandalwood trees is a serious offence under Sections 86 and 87 of the Karnataka Forest Act, 1963. As per the Act, any case of a forest offence involving the cutting, uprooting, removal, or damage to a sandalwood tree or any part of it belonging to the government, or to an occupant or holder of land or other person referred to in Section 83, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term that may extend to 10 years and with a fine that may extend to Rs 1,00,000. In the case of a first offence, the term of imprisonment shall not be less than five years, and the fine shall not be less than Rs 50,000. In the case of a second or subsequent offence, the term of imprisonment shall not be less than seven years, and the amount of fine shall not be less than Rs 75,000.

Although farmers are permitted to grow sandalwood on private land, they are prohibited from cutting, selling, or transporting it without prior permission. Any such activity, even on private land should be taken up only after informing the Karnataka Forest Department, which handles the legal procurement and sale of sandalwood.

Following alleged felling of over 100 trees, including sandalwood trees, illegally, KFD files FIR, with action to be taken based on findings

In many cases, the police also add charges under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), especially Section 379 for theft. As per the law, the police can arrest such an offender without a warrant and bail is usually not granted. Repeat offences can attract a heavy penalty.

"Further action will be taken based on the outcome of the enquiry," said Kumar.

The case of illegal tree felling first came to the fore on January 18, when GBA filed the complaint against the Embassy group under Section 8 of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976.

Locals in the area, however, allege that the Embassy staff tried to burn down the green cover on multiple occasions since 2023. These fires were reported in the news, but no cases of arson were allegedly filed.

"As per the law, removal of more than 50 trees requires the applicant to publish a public notice through the Greater Bengaluru Authority to invite comments or objections by citizens. This is followed by an on-site inspection by the Tree Expert Committee to analyse if the trees proposed to be felled can be saved on-site or can be moved to another location. It is apparent that the Embassy group has felled the trees to circumvent this process," said a city-based environmentalist. —BMB

K'taka records sharp fall in child labour rescues over five years

State's NCLP data shows declining rescues, but experts warn reduced numbers don't eliminate risks of hidden or unreported child labour

Sridhar.Vivan
@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @sridharvMIRROR

Karnataka has recorded a steady decline in the number of children withdrawn from labour under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) over the past five years, according to data presented in the Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Labour & Employment. While the figures suggest progress, experts underline the need for sustained monitoring to ensure children remain in school and do not slip back into exploitative work.

In Karnataka, 763 children were rescued from labour under the NCLP in 2018–19. The number fell sharply to 363 in 2019–20, 275 in 2020–21, and 230 in 2021–22. Notably, no children were reported as rescued in 2022–23. Officials attribute this downward trend to improved enforcement of child labour laws, coordinated inspections, and greater public awareness about child rights. However, they caution that the absence of reported cases does not automatically mean the problem has been eradicated, stressing that even isolated instances require swift intervention.

At the national level, India has also seen a decline in rescues under the NCLP, from 50,284 children in 2018–19 to 13,761 in 2022–23. States such as West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra initially recorded the highest numbers but showed significant reductions over the period. Other states reported fluctuating figures, reflecting regional differences in enforcement intensity and socio-economic conditions.

Experts stress that falling rescue numbers must translate into sustained schooling, rehabilitation, and community spport to prevent children returning to work

Lok Sabha data highlights Karnataka's progress under NCLP, yet activists stress sustained monitoring, education access, and community engagement are vital to prevent vulnerable children slipping back into exploitative work

Child rights experts emphasise that rescues alone are insufficient. Long-term solutions must focus on access to quality education, rehabilitation support, skill development, and sustained community engagement. They note that Karnataka's experience highlights how targeted interventions can yield results, but continued vigilance remains essential to ensure no child is left behind.

Sustained funding, interdepartmental coordination, and grassroots vigilance will determine whether gains translate into lasting protection.

Session set for Congress–BJP faceoff

The first legislature session of the year, beginning on January 22, is poised to become a major political flashpoint, with the ruling Congress and the Opposition gearing up for an intense confrontation inside the House.

The Congress plans to use the session to launch a constitutional and political attack on the Centre, with a sharp focus on alleged cuts in MGNREGA funding and what it describes as anti-federal central policies. The Governor's address on the opening day is expected to underline the state government's achievements while also flagging what the Congress terms the Centre's lack of cooperation. Political observers believe the tone of the address will set the agenda and mood for the rest of the session.

Meanwhile, the BJP–JD(S) combine is preparing an aggressive counter-offensive, targeting the government over alleged large-scale corruption in the excise department. The Opposition is likely to disrupt proceedings, demand the excise minister's resignation, and press allegations of kickbacks linked to transfers and licences. Issues such as the rising drug menace among students, alleged VIP treatment of influential inmates at Parappana Agrahara jail, threats to officials, and illegal occupation of government land are also expected to be raised, pointing to a stormy session ahead.

All eyes on CM's 17th budget

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has begun preparations for what will be a historic 17th state budget, convening the first pre-budget meeting with finance and senior department officials. The Chief Minister is expected to hold a series of follow-up consultations in the coming weeks, including department-wise reviews and interactions with farmers, industrialists, labour unions and experts from various sectors. These discussions are aimed at shaping budget priorities ahead of its likely presentation during the legislature session scheduled for the first week of March.

Siddaramaiah has already entered the record books by presenting 16 state budgets, overtaking former chief minister Ramakrishna Hegde's tally of 14 in June 2023. Presenting one more budget will place him alongside Gujarat's former chief minister Vajubhai Vala, who holds the national record for the highest number of budgets presented by a chief minister. Meanwhile, attention will also be on the Centre's 2026–27 Union Budget, to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on February 1. **–BMB**

Lake is dying slow death, warn citizens

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

flow has been taken up and completed by BBMP. Maintenance of the said lake is being carried out by the BBMP itself. Home-guards were deployed for the protection of the lake premises," the report has noted.

However, lake walkers and citizens actively involved in the management of the water body say the lake is dying a slow death. According to locals, while the lake, following rejuvenation by Greater Bengaluru Authority (erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike), was full of water during 2022 and 2023 and the lake area was relatively well maintained, the situation has degraded significantly since 2024.

"The state government has repurposed old reports. Currently, it is completely dried. While the lake has two inlets, only one is receiving minimal water. At the other inlet, all the water is being diverted and is not flowing into the lake. It is possibly water mixed with sewage. There is growth of weeds in the lake, and garbage dumping is taking place inside the lake premises and in the water body. There are no guards at the lake," said Vilasini Krishnan, a resident of the area, who has been actively involved in the maintenance of the water body.

The issue of encroachment at Kembathalli Lake was highlighted to the NGT by locals in 2022. Based on complaints raised in a letter petition, the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal formulated a joint committee comprising the State Wetland Authority, the State PCB Commissioner, Municipal Corporation Greater Bengaluru, and the Collector, Bengaluru. The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board was established as the nodal agency for coordination and compliance. The committee was supposed to undertake site visits, look into the grievances of the applicants, and take requisite remedial action.

Residents in the area say they have approached authorities to look into the issue of inadequate water flow to the lake by conducting an inspection to locate water diversions upstream or blockage at the inlets. However, no action has been taken to diagnose the problem and find a solution.

Locals also highlight that the survey of the lake has been left incomplete, with only one survey number being mentioned in the Action Taken Report.

"The departments involved are either directing us to some other department or citing reasons such as inadequate rainfall leading to the situation. We have presented IMD's rainfall data and the fact that lakes in the vicinity are full, to which they have no answers. While the matter is sub-judice and hearings are being conducted along with reports filed by the government and agencies, we are yet to see changes on ground," said Shailesh Charati, another resident who has been involved in lake maintenance.

Regulars at the lake say that, while an affidavit filed by the KSPCB claims that fencing around Kembattahalli Lake has been completed. However, this statement is contradictory to the actual situation observed on the ground.

"Two gates out of three are left open. This has created a thoroughfare for both pedestrians and vehicles, which is detrimental to the lake's protection. Open gates have facilitated garbage dumping, further degrading the lake's environment," said another resident of the area.

Most snatchers work in pairs, say police

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

as chain snatching and snatching of bags or mobile phones have come down but it has not completely stopped." Chain snatching has long been a recurring problem in Bengaluru, especially in residential areas. General snatching refers to the quick theft of personal items such as mobile phones, purses or bags, usually carried out in an opportunistic manner.

A senior police official explained that any act of snatching, whether it involves a gold chain or any other valuable item, is generally registered as a robbery case. However, for simpler valuables such as bags or small personal items, there is a specific section for snatching introduced under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Earlier, under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), there was no separate provision for snatching, the punishment was comparatively lighter, and bail was more easily granted in such cases.

Senior police officers explained that offenders typically take advantage of a momentary distraction, ride past the victim, grab the item and flee the scene within seconds. Offenders find it easier to grab a phone from a pedestrian or two-wheeler rider than forcibly snatch gold chains, which often involves greater resistance and involves weapons due to resistance, an official said.

In June 2016, the Bengaluru police became the first in Karnataka to systematically treat chain snatching as robbery (IPC Section 397) rather than simple theft, to ensure more stringent punishment (up to 7 years) and deter offenders.

Police say these crimes are frequently linked to organised gangs and repeated offenders. The usual modus operandi involves two persons riding a motorcycle, wearing helmets to conceal their identity, and targeting women or elderly people in busy streets or isolated areas. The impact of chain snatching is also more severe, as it involves high-value targets, attracts aggravated robbery charges and often leads to large-scale recovery of stolen gold. In essence, while general snatching can involve any easily accessible item, chain snatching is a specialised, more violent and organised offence driven by the lucrative resale market for gold.

Areas such as Majestic, Yeshwanthpur, KR Market, Indiranagar, Whitefield and parts of Outer Ring Road have emerged as hotspots for phone snatching, particularly during early morning and late evening hours. Police officials said most of the accused operate in pairs on two-wheelers. One rider slows down near pedestrians talking on their phones or scrolling while walking, while the pillion rider snatches the device and the duo speeds away. "Victims are often distracted and do not react immediately, which gives the offenders crucial seconds to escape," an officer said.

'The ball is in RCB court'

KSCA prez says it's team's responsibility to come back to Chinnaswamy

Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) president Venkatesh Prasad on Wednesday placed the onus squarely on Royal Challengers Bengaluru to keep their IPL 2026 home matches at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, reminding the franchise of the affection fans have shown to them since its inception.

The Chinnaswamy has received conditional permission from the Karnataka government to hold IPL and international matches after the current KSCA regime held several rounds of talks with various state agencies since last month.

The fabled venue has been deprived of cricket since 11 fans were killed in a June 4-stampede during RCB's victory celebrations.

"We have received the conditional permission from government, and we are confident of getting an unconditional permission sooner rather than later, and after doing all this, I sincerely hope that Royal Challengers Bengaluru will play all their seven home matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium," Prasad said in a select media gathering.

Prasad's plea assumes significance at a time when talks are gaining momentum of RCB shifting their home matches to Mumbai or Pune and Raipur.

"So, now the ball is in RCB's court. I also hope that RCB also gets involved and engages with the government for smooth conduct of the matches. So far, it has been only one sided. We are doing this for cricket. Whether it is IPL or international matches," he added.

Prasad reminded Royal Challengers management that the Bengaluru fans have stayed fanatically loyal with the franchise since its inception, and now it is obligatory for them to stand with their massive fan base.

"So, from here onwards, the RCB has to take things forward. It is the responsibility of the RCB to take this dialogue forward. It is their responsibility to come back here and play and not to take the game away from Bengaluru.

"They have grown to this level only because of having played in Bengaluru and because of the Bengaluru crowd. So, I have asked them to come and play here," he said.

The RCB, meanwhile, appreciated the efforts of KSCA and the state government to bring back cricket to the Chinnaswamy but admitted that a few areas still remain to be ironed out.

"We welcome Karnataka Government's decision to allow matches to be held in the iconic M Chinnaswamy Stadium and we also recognise and highly appreciate KSCA's efforts in the ongoing infrastructure work that has led to this conditional approval to host matches," said RCB management in a statement.

They said details are still being on worked upon in that regard. "From our preliminary conversations (with KSCA), there are still a few grey areas that need to be looked into, and we are considering these parameters and inputs from all stakeholders before arriving at a responsible decision for the team and our fans," the franchise added.

Santosh Menon, the KSCA secretary, assured RCB that every single corrective measure that has been put forward by the government officials has been adhered to in their letter and spirit. "RCB are keen on playing here. So, let's not take that away from them..." —PTI

INFOCUS
RCB RETURN

KSCA President Venkatesh Prasad and team at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, on Wednesday

CRIME FILES

Man arrested for stalking, harassing woman for months

The South Women Police have arrested a man from Rewari in Haryana for allegedly stalking and sexually harassing and sending obscene messages to a 34-year-old woman residing in Bengaluru.

The accused, identified as Sudhir Kumar, was taken into custody following a complaint lodged by the victim, who is originally from Haryana and has been living in Bengaluru for the past 15 years. According to the FIR, the harassment began in March 2025 and continued despite repeated warnings from the woman. The situation escalated in May 2025, when Sudhir Kumar allegedly travelled to the woman's family home in Haryana and attempted to contact her and her relatives. Police said then created multiple Instagram accounts and sent explicit and threatening messages to the victim. On January 12, he allegedly tracked her to her workplace at a gym in Banashankari and began enquiring about her work schedule and movements, prompting her to approach the police. —BMB

Crowd of no help as women harassed at Church Street

A video that went viral on social media caused public anger after a woman alleged that she and her friend were sexually harassed on Church Street for 30 minutes. Cubbon Park police officials confirmed the FIR was registered three days ago. The woman shared a video on Instagram, which went viral. In the video, a man is seen putting his hand on his pants and touching himself while standing in full public view. Despite noticing that he was being filmed, the man allegedly continued his behaviour facing the women.

The woman said she and her friend were stalked and watched for nearly 30 minutes. "I was surrounded by people and still felt completely unsafe," she wrote, adding that crowds do not guarantee protection. —BMB

Man strangles wife, tries to pass it off as suicide

The Rajarajeshwarinagar police have arrested two men for allegedly strangling a woman to death and attempting to pass it off as a case of suicide on January 10.

The accused has been identified as Virupaksha Gowda S (29), a shop owner and resident of Channasandra, who is the husband of the deceased. The second accused, Pundalika Janapa Lamani (19), is a worker at the shop. According to police, the complainant, Arun Kumar, approached the station on January 10, alleging foul play in the death of his younger sister, Asha S. Kumar stated that Virupaksha was irregular at work, financially dependent on Asha, and frequently quarrelled with her. Marital disputes intensified over allegations of an illicit relationship, forcing the couple to live separately for over a month. A divorce petition was pending before a family court.

Woman stabs husband to death

A woman has been arrested by Bommanahalli police on Wednesday for allegedly murdering her husband following years of domestic harassment at Hongasandra, on Tuesday night.

According to the police, the man had been harassing his wife, creating a tense atmosphere at home after drinking alcohol. Unable to bear the continued harassment, the woman is said to have stabbed her husband with a knife late around 9.30 pm on Tuesday. —BMB

INBRIEF

Sudha Murty warns public against deepfake investment scams

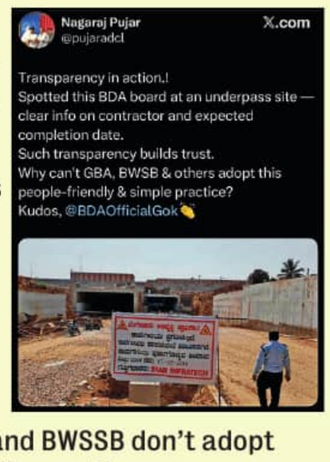
Rajya Sabha MP and philanthropist Sudha Murty has issued a public warning after deepfake videos falsely portraying her endorsing high-return investment schemes began circulating on social media.
The message comes after multiple complaints have been registered at cyber police station impersonating her and exploiting public trust.
In a video message released to counter the fraud, Murty said she was deeply concerned and pained to learn that several people, including those known to her personally, had already fallen prey to the scam and lost large sums of money. The manipulated clips, widely shared on platforms such as Facebook, show her allegedly promoting an investment that promises to multiply ₹20,000 ten times within a short period.
Rejecting the claims, Murty said she has never promoted any financial products or investment schemes. "It is fake news. You will lose your money. I never talk about investments. I speak only about work, India's culture, women and education," she said.
She urged citizens to exercise caution before investing based on online ads. She advised people to verify claims through official channels, consult bank officials and report suspicious content. BMB

Gen Z-inspired lounge at airport

Kempegowda International Airport on Wednesday unveiled 'Gate Z', a first-of-its-kind social lounge at Terminal 2, designed inspired by the Gen Z generation. Located next to the 080 International Lounge in Terminal 2, Gate Z goes beyond the traditional concept of quiet waiting spaces and instead offers a lifestyle-oriented space and interaction. Airport officials said the lounge is not restricted to a specific age group but represents a mindset that appeals to a wide range of travellers. Designed as a contemporary "market street", the lounge features curved seating, interactive zones, soothing lighting and clearly demarcated spaces for work, relaxation and socialising.
Key attractions include Bubble & Brew, a café-bar; the Sipping Lounge for informal conversations; the retro-themed Subway Diner with live counters; and the Amphizone, a contemporary amphitheatre for screenings, pop-up events and gatherings. The interiors use a warm palette of cyan and burnt orange, eco-friendly materials and AI-enabled navigation tools to navigate passenger convenience. BMB

SOCIALTATTLE

That went viral
A social media user highlighted a BDA project board at an underpass showing contractor details and completion timelines, calling it a simple yet effective transparency measure. They questioned why agencies like GBA and BWSSB don't adopt such people-friendly practices.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Transparency in action.!
Spotted this BDA board at an underpass site — clear info on contractor and expected completion date.
Such transparency builds trust.
Why can't GBA, BWSB & others adopt this people-friendly & simple practice?
Kudos, @BDAOfficialGok

While acknowledging gaps in governance, a citizen appreciated lake restoration efforts at Kalena Agrahara, noting the thriving ecosystem developed there. The user said such environmental work deserves recognition amid frequent criticism of civic agencies.

Luffy
@Maestralezer
X.com
While there r a lot of cons we can blame govt. Restoring lakes is something I'll appreciate. The kind of ecosystem that has built here at Kalena Agrahara lake is so wonderful to see
@ChristinMP_ @bengalurupost1

What's tweeting
Pointing to a garbage dumping spot in Adugodi, a platform X user flagged poor civic sense despite warning boards being installed.
The user stressed that enforcement and public responsibility must go hand in hand to keep Bengaluru clean.

London-style double decker buses start rolling in Bengaluru

Double decker sightseeing buses have started operating in the city from Wednesday, with the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) launching three 'Ambari' buses to boost Bengaluru's tourism appeal. The new service marks a revival of the double decker concept, which was earlier run by BMTC but later withdrawn due to losses.

This time, KSTDC is betting on a curated tourism experience, with the buses plying across routes covering all major city attractions. Designed mainly for tourists, the buses offer a convenient way to explore Bengaluru.

One can book their tickets online at the kstdc website and for offline booking it is available at Ravindra Kalakshetra with the ticket price at Rs 180. Officials say the initiative is aimed at making city sightseeing easier and more attractive for both domestic and international visitors. **BMB**

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Abbas R/O no 41 10th cross road, Mariyappana Palya, B'lore 560021 Have changed my name Ebram Sab Abbas to Abbas for all future purposes.

I, Vinod R/o No 32 Sapthagiri 3rd cross vikas layout maruthi Nagar 2nd stage YELAHANKA Bengaluru 560064 Have changed my name to Vinod Karbari for all Purposes.

I, ANITHA RAJ R W/o Anthony Raj C. R/O No. 31, 4th A Cross, Bhuvaneshwarinagar, Hebbal Kempapura, Bangalore - 560024 have changed my name from ANITA MARIA GORETTI to ANITHA RAJ R

I, AYEESHA BANO residing at # No 807, 2nd Floor, 5th Main, 12th Cross, Yaseen Nagar, HBR Layout, Bangalore – 560043. I have changed my name to AYESHA BANU vide affidavit dated 20/01/2026 sworn before notary. Leela Bangalore

I,SURYA SAIT S/o RAJKANNAN SAIT aged about 25 years residing at Old No.5/1,New No.11,Ground Floor, Buddha Road, Jai Bharath Nagar, MS Nagar Post, B'luru-560033 wish to change my father's name from R SETTU (as per my 10th standard marks sheet) to RAJKANNAN SAIT (as per my documents and his KYC documents) vide affidavit dtd:20/01/2026 sworn before notary Uday Kumar K,B'luru.

I, ANSAR KHAN R/o No 2 I CROSS 3RD MAIN OPP NOOR MASJID BISMILLAH NAGAR BANGALORE 560029 Have changed my name to ANSAR KHAN M K for all Purposes.

I, Chandni D/o, Hiral R/o A6, G01 Elita Prominade Apartments JP Nagar 7th Phase, Bengaluru have changed my name to Gandhi Chandni Jineshbhai for all purposes.

I, Mohammed Javed Akhter, R/o. 36/B, 1st Floor, 1st Main, Doctor's Layout, Arekere, Bangalore-560076, have changed my name from Mohammad Jawed Akhter to Mohammed Javed Akhter vide affidavit sworn before Notary M.Rajendra, Bangalore on 02.01.26.

I Manisha Kumari, R/o 117L FF21-LIT-Block D, Vishnu Residency, Next to Narayana E-Techno School, Thubarahalli, Bangalore-560066 have changed my name to Manisha Kapoor. Henceforth, I shall be known and called by the name Manisha Kapoor for all purposes.

I, NITA BHAGVANDAS THAKKAR, D/o Bhagvandas Chandumal Thakkar, R/o #006-A Block, Amrutha Grandeur Apartment, Rachanhalli Lake Road, Nagwara, Bengaluru - 560077, have changed my name as NITA THAKKAR, vide affidavit dated 20.01.2026, sworn before notary Nijagunaradhya T. C, Bengaluru.

I, ROSHANIBEN KISHORKUMAR THAKKAR W/o VISHAL KUMAR R/at No. 210, Sri Tirumala Silver Springs, Hebron Enclave, Road, Hallehalli, Bengaluru-560036 have changed my name to ROSHANI THAKKAR vide affidavit dated: 20/1/2026 Before Notary K.V.Mani Bangalore.

I, Nikitha P Bhurat D/o Padamchand Bhurat R/o #104,1st Floor, Perfecta Charm Apts, Albert Victor Road, Chamarajpet, B'luru- 560018 have changed my name to Nikitha for all purposes.

I, Dolarben Bharatkumar Gheraiya D/O, Laxmidas Motiram Soni R/o D802, Purva Fountain Square,Marathahalli Bengaluru 560037 have changed my name to Dolar Bharat Gheraiya for all purpose

I, Amit Kalyansingh Burad S/o Kalyansingh Burad saramahal R/o #1663 ,5th Cross , 2nd block banashankari 1st stage Bengaluru 560050 have changed my name to AMIT KUMAR BURAD and my father name is kalyansingh Burad for all purposes.

I, SY ZABIULLA s/o SYED ZAHEER residing at #355, 1st Main, 5th Cross, S R Layout, Thanisandra Main Road, Saraipalya, Bangalore – 560077. I have changed my name to SY JABEEULLA vide affidavit dated 20/01/2026 sworn before notary. Leela Bangalore

PRIYA Darshana I. R/o # 6, 5th Cross, Sudhamanagar, Near Manjunath Swamy Temple Road, Bengaluru 560027. Have Changed My Name to Priya Darshana, Shall Be Called by This Name for All Purpose.

I, Bidappa Nishant Naniah Pattamada S/o Pattamada Ponnappa Biddappa R/o No 6 Ganapathy Apartments Lakshmi Road Hockey, Stadium Shantinagar Wilson Grd, Bengaluru – 560027 have changed my name to Nishant Naniah Pattamada Biddappa for all purposes.

I, Sourabh Shantinath Patravale Resident NO. A708, Sumadhura Sushantham, Gkvk Rd, Bel Layout, Blr-560065, changed My Name from Sourabh Patravale to Sourabh Shantinath patravale for all further purposes. (Reference Date of Birth 10/06/2000).

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SCREEN TIME SHOULDN'T BE DOWNTIME

'Unwinding' with screens may be making us more stressed, here's what to try instead

Conversations and social media feeds are saturated with the language of "me time," burnout, boundaries and nervous system regulation.

To meet this demand, the wellness industry has grown into a multi trillion-dollar global market. Myriad providers offer products, services and lifestyle prescriptions that promise calm, balance and restoration.

Paradoxically, though, even as interest in self-care continues to grow, Americans' mental health is getting worse.

I am a professor of public health who studies health behaviours and the gap between intentions and outcomes. I became interested in this self-care paradox recently, after I suffered from a concussion. I was prescribed two months of strictly screen-free cognitive rest – no television, email, Zooming, social media, streaming or texting.

The benefits were almost immediate, and they surprised me. I slept better, had a longer attention span and had a newfound sense of mental quiet. These effects reflected a well-established principle in neuroscience: When cognitive and emotional stimuli decrease, the brain's regulatory systems can recover from overload and chronic stress.

Obviously, most people can't go 100 per cent screen-free for days, much less months, but the underlying principle offers a powerful lesson for practicing effective self-care.

A nation under strain

Americans' self-rated mental health is now at the lowest point since Gallup started tracking this issue in 2001. National surveys consistently detect high levels of stress and emotional strain.

Roughly one-third of US adults report feeling overwhelmed most days. Sleep disruption, anxiety, poor concentration and emotional exhaustion are widespread, particularly among young adults and women.

Chronic disease patterns mirror this strain. When daily stress becomes chronic, it can trigger biological changes that increase the risk of long-term conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

How people try to cope

Many Americans say they actively practise self-care in everyday life. For example, they describe taking mental health days, protecting personal time, setting boundaries around work and prioritising rest and leisure.

The problem lies in how they use that leisure time.

Americans spend far more time watching TV than exercising, spending time with friends or practising reflection through activities like yoga. Other common self-care activities include watching movies and gaming.

Modern leisure time increasingly includes smartphone use. Surveys suggest that mobile phones have become the dominant screen for many Americans, with adults spending several hours per day on their phones.

For many adults, checking social media or watching short videos has become a default relaxation behaviour layered on top of traditional screen use.

Although many people turn to screen-based activities to wind down, these activities may have the opposite effect biologically.

Why modern screen use feels different

Pre-internet forms of leisure often involved activities such as watching scheduled television programmes, listening to radio broadcasts or reading books and magazines. For all of these pastimes, the content followed a predictable sequence with natural stopping points.

Today's digital media environment looks very different. People routinely engage with multiple screens at once, respond to frequent notifications and switch rapidly between several streams of content. These environments continuously require users to split their attention, engage their emotions and make decisions.

Splitting attention between more than one screen at a time, such as using the phone while watching television, is common. This juggling exposes peoples' brains to multiple streams of sensory and emotional input simultaneously.

When 'rest' doesn't restore

Against the backdrop of daily hassles and competing demands, it can feel like relief to flip on the TV. Even while people are sitting or lying still, being onscreen can keep their nervous systems in a heightened state of arousal. It may look like downtime, but it doesn't create the biological conditions for restoration.

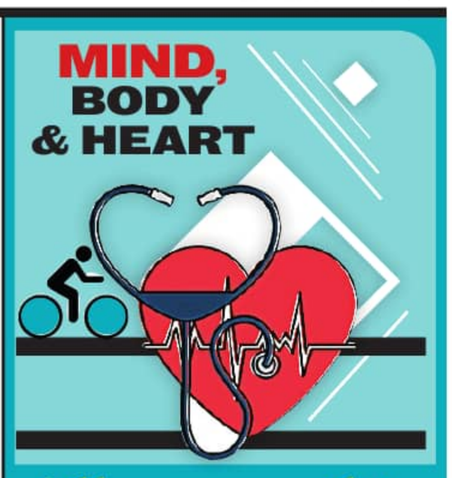
How to wind down

Evidence suggests that mental relief comes not from adding new coping strategies, but from reducing the number of demands placed on the brain.

The goal is to intentionally reduce mental load, not to abandon all digital devices.

To improve well-being in our overstimulated society, it's important to understand the difference between feeling as though you are unwinding and actually allowing your brain and body to recover. In my view, fewer screens, fewer inputs, fewer emotional demands and more protected time for genuine cognitive rest are important components of an effective wellness strategy.

(By Robin Pickering, Gonzaga University, The Conversation)



All you need to know about...

Competitive friendships

Friendship is undeniably one of the most beautiful things in life that one can experience. To have at least one person you share inside jokes, struggles, joys, and basically every minor inconvenience with is certainly something everyone strives to have. However, just like any other human relationship, friendships can also become complicated when emotions like jealousy, envy, and competition start to emerge. So, here are 5 ways you can deal with a competitive friend.

Find out the cause
Not every competitive friendship stems from malice. Sometimes insecurity and miscommunication can lead a person to feel the need to make themselves appear better than others.

Establish boundaries
Another great way of dealing with a competitive friend if you do not want to cut them out of your life is to establish adequate boundaries. People tend to have certain trigger points that incite their competitiveness, so steering away from such topics can help.

Taking the praise route
Another way to tackle a competitive friendship is to use praise and affirmation. Demonstrating that you are in a secure place and are not threatened by the friend's achievements will make them realise that the friendship is not a race towards a finish line with one person emerging as a winner.

Prioritise self care
Sometimes, when all else fails, the only way to deal with a competitive friend is to cut them off. If your friendship gets to a point where it starts to exhaust your mental health or interfere with your daily life, it is extremely important to break contact.

—Femina

MIRRORLIGHTS

Colder weather, lower motivation? Here's the truth about winter fitness

As temperatures dip and days are colder, fitness routines are often the first to take a slip. Winter is routinely blamed for skipping the goals, missed workouts, and dropping motivation. But according to experts, the season itself isn't the problem—it's how we interpret its effects. Dr Archana Batra, dietitian and certified diabetes educator, explains that understanding how winter affects the body helps shift fitness expectations from guilt-driven to sustainable, while also busting common myths around cold-weather motivation and movement.

Myth 1: Cold weather kills motivation
Reduced daylight impacts vitamin D levels and serotonin production, influencing mood, energy, and sleep quality. What feels like a lack of willpower is often a biological response. Regular physical activity becomes even more important in winter, as movement improves insulin sensitivity, boosts endorphins, and helps regulate circadian rhythm—supporting both physical and mental health.

Myth 2: Effective workouts must be long or outdoors
There's a widespread belief that fitness only counts if it involves outdoor cardio or long gym sessions. From a metabolic standpoint, this simply isn't true. Short, indoor workouts such as strength training, resistance-band exercises, yoga, or mobility drills are highly effective. Even 15 to 30 minutes of structured movement helps preserve muscle mass, regulate blood sugar, and maintain metabolic rate.

Myth 3: Winter is a break from fitness
Completely pausing activity during winter can negatively affect metabolism, joint health, and muscle strength. Experts suggest viewing winter as a maintenance phase rather than a reset.

—Femina

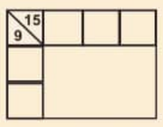
Chai-Time

SOLVE IT IN A MINUTE

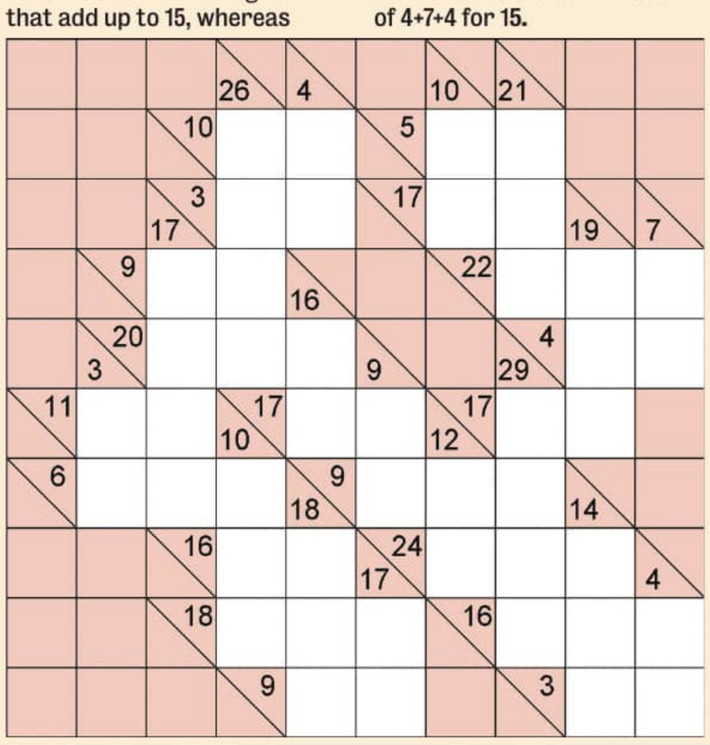
196 / 14^2x = 14^2x
x = ?

Kakuro

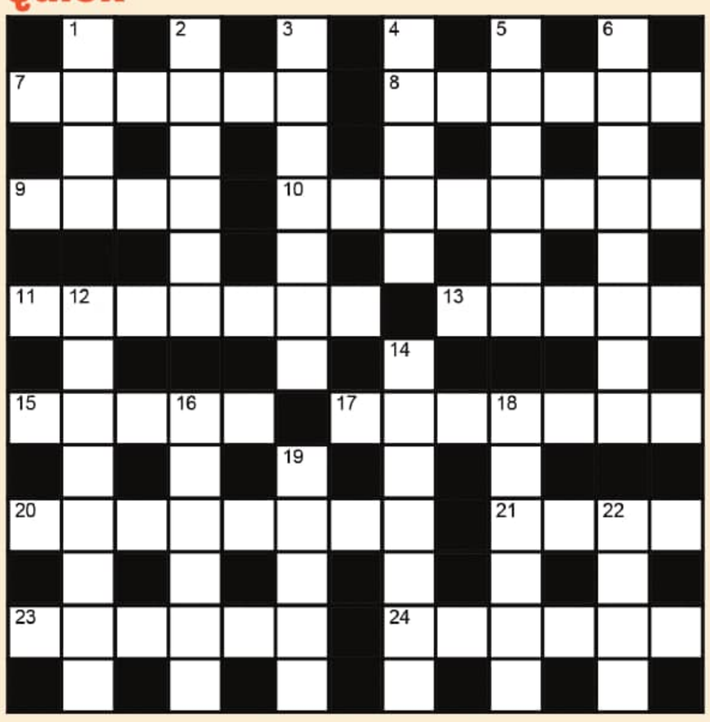
The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.



Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

7 Consolation; support (6)
8 Spanish friends (6)
9 Occupation (4)
10 Pull ahead of (8)
11 Beats, pounds or destroys (7)
13 Stranger (5)
15 Marriage settlement (5)
17 Protective wall in front of a trench (7)
20 Wrong-headed (8)
21 Fish for a small boat (4)
23 You will find the Bangalore Golf Club on this road (6)
24 Novelist Colin ___ (6)

DOWN

1 Slang usage meaning, "nothing doing"? (2,2)
2 Short coat (6)
3 Gobbles up greedily (7)
4 Touched clumsily–like a dog, maybe? (5)
5 Rejected or spurned (6)
6 Two words of warning or mild reprimand? (4,4)
12 Better than the expected norm or standard? (5,3)
14 Share of the spoils (4-3)
16 Withdraw a promise (6)
18 South Indian state ___ Pradesh (6)
19 Norse goddess of love (5)
22 Chain of rocks (4)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: X EQUALS C

VQM XZS'P JQIE Z TZS EQUS UYPJQMP DPZVYSF EQUS UYPJ JYT.

Linemaro

Hi, I'm the girl of your dreams. Someone said you were looking for me

Mindchow

What you seek is seeking you

Joke of the day

One way to stop a runaway horse is to bet on him

Loop

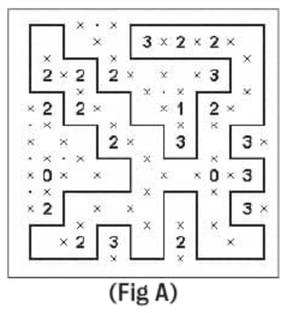
Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

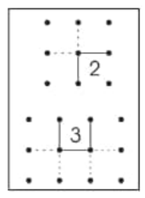
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

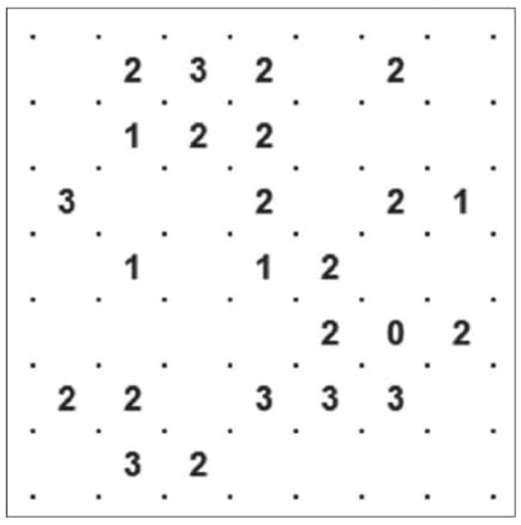
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



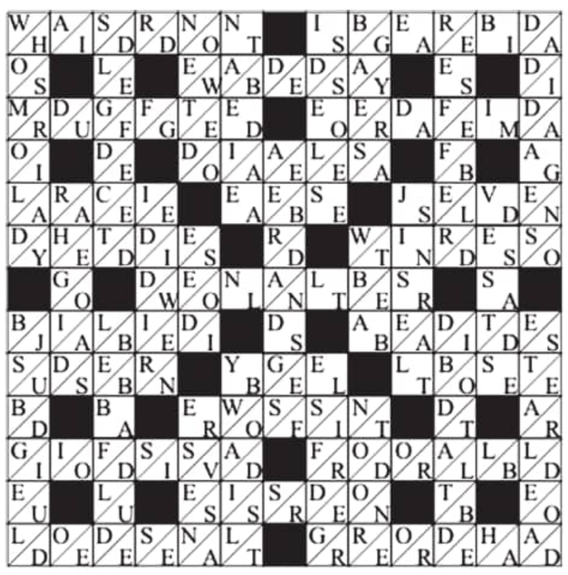
(Fig A)



(Fig B) Not Allowed



Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...

1 C	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8				
9				

ACROSS

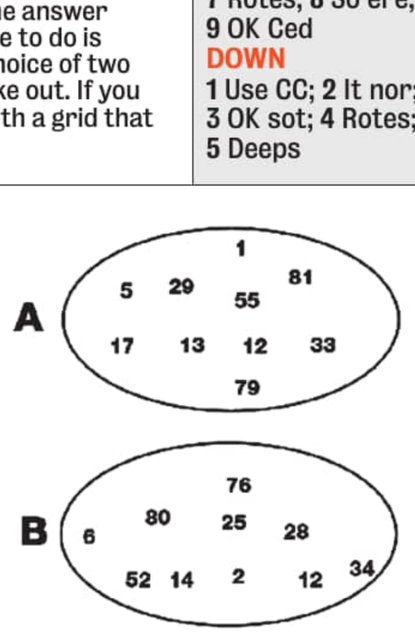
1 CT sis; 6 Ton-up; 7 Rotes; 8 So ere; 9 OK Ced

DOWN

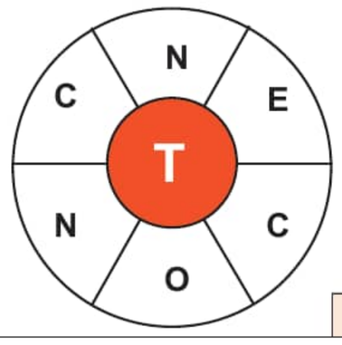
1 Use CC; 2 It nor; 3 OK sot; 4 Rotes; 5 Deeps

Mensapuzzle

Which letter replaces the blank and completes the third wheel?



Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

02 Average; 03 Good; 04 Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

	5		8	7	4		2	
6								7
	1						3	
4		7		5		9		1
			3		9			
2		5		8		3		4
	4						9	
5								3
	2		6	9	7		5	

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

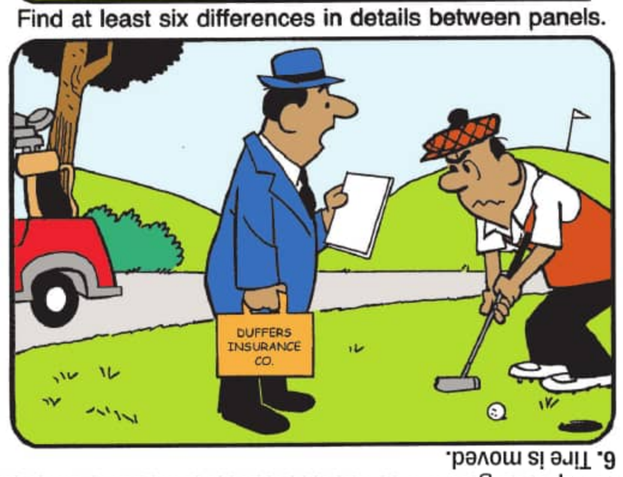
Easy = 27
1 2 8 9

Medium = 10
3 7 8 8

Hard = 45
1 9 1 5

Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.



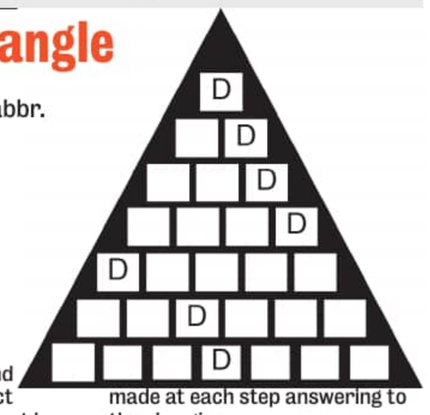
Differences: 1. Putter is different. 2. Man is thinner. 3. Cap is larger. 4. Tree has less leaves. 5. Mouth is different. 6. Tire is moved.

Riddler

Recently, Snow White's seven dwarfs met up with three of their friends and went to the cinema to see Bambi. From the clues below, can you determine the order in which they stood in the ticket queue? Grumpy was in front of Dopey. Stumpy was behind Sneezy and Doc. Doc was in front of Droopy and Happy. Sleepy was behind Stumpy, Smelly and Happy. Happy was in front of Sleepy, Smelly and Bashful. Bashful was behind Smelly, Droopy and Sleepy. Sneezy was in front of Dopey. Smelly was in front of Grumpy, Stumpy and Sneezy. Dopey was in front of Droopy. Sleepy was in front of Grumpy and Bashful. Dopey was behind Sneezy, Doc and Sleepy. Stumpy was in front of Dopey. Smelly was behind Doc.

Alpha triangle

1 Five hundred
2 Advertisement, abbr.
3 As well as
4 French novelist
5 College bigwigs
6 Car styles
7 Parlour treats



Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE »

COMICS

Popeye

HE JUST HIT ME SWEETIE ON'A HEAD WIT' A COCONUT.
THE COCONUT IS OUR NATIONAL FRUIT... IT IS ALWAYS USED AS A ROYAL WELCOME!
WELCOME!
?
WE SAILORS HAS A WAY TO GREET SWABS LIKE YER KING... I THINKS I WOULD LIKE TO SAY HELLO TO HIM!
SPLENDID! OUR ROYAL DUNDER LOVES STRANGE CUSTOMS!
?
NICE!
4-23
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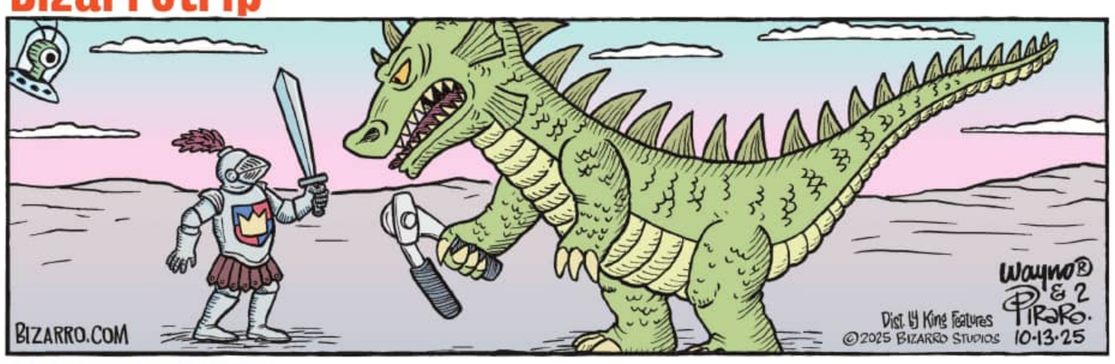
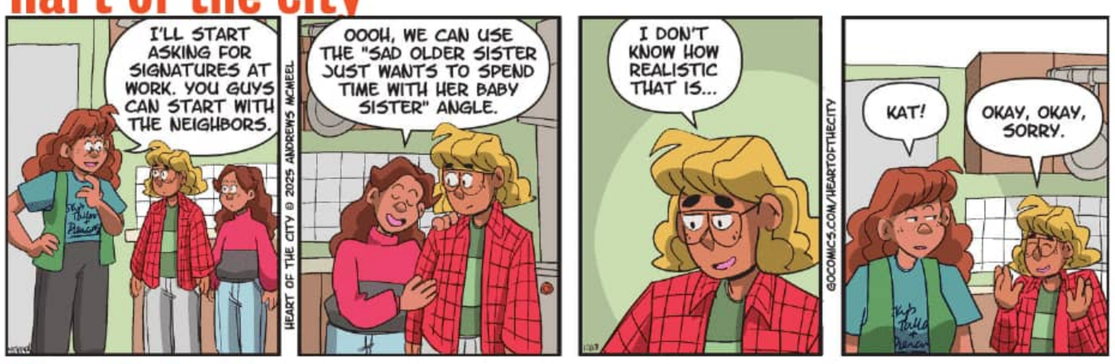
popeye.com

Bizarrotrip



Diamond Lil

Hart of the city


I'LL START ASKING FOR SIGNATURES AT WORK. YOU GUYS CAN START WITH THE NEIGHBORS.
OOOH, WE CAN USE THE "SAD OLDER SISTER JUST WANTS TO SPEND TIME WITH HER BABY SISTER" ANGLE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW REALISTIC THAT IS...
KAT!
OKAY, OKAY, SORRY.
HEART OF THE CITY © 2025 ANDREWS MCMEEL
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Crankshaft

WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?
I'M TYING BARS OF SOAP TO THE TREES TO TRY TO PREVENT BUCK RUB BY THE DEER...
AND TO STAVE OFF TREE NEGLECT GUILT!
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tombatiuk.com/books
BATIUK & DAVIS
10-13

Mutts

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

DR SUNDEEP KOCHAR

If it's your birthday today

Expect a year of profound transformation and psychological renewal. A deep dive into your joint finances, shared resources, or core values will bring clarity. Release old patterns that restrict your growth and embrace vulnerability. This intense process will empower you, resulting in a powerful personal rebirth and greater authenticity.

Aries Mar 21–Apr 20

Past lessons help you grow wiser today. Work brings lively momentum and productivity. Strong health supports accomplishment. Evening relaxation with someone special brings warmth and restores balance beautifully.

Taurus Apr 21–May 20

New income opportunities uplift your confidence. Partnership energy strengthens love and business plans. Family wellness improves. A creative hobby refreshes your mind and brings joyful inspiration throughout the day.

Gemini May 21–Jun 21

Patience brings clarity at work today. Supportive loved ones help ease stress. Singles enjoy meaningful encounters. Academic focus grows stronger and children show impressive dedication, creating a positive and motivating atmosphere.

Cancer Jun 22–July 23

Work focus brings promising advancement. Evenings brim with family joy. Inner intuition guides wise choices about health. Staying dedicated helps exciting future opportunities unfold naturally and confidently.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23

Quiet moments nurture inner peace today. Work from home supports focus. Loved ones adjust gracefully. Encouraging oce news lifts your spirit as the day ends on an optimistic note.

Virgo Aug 24–Sep 23

Graceful communication smooths challenges. Family guidance strengthens emotional comfort. Academic intentions gain momentum. Supportive interactions brighten your day and inspire thoughtful progress in both personal and professional matters.

Libra Sep 24–Oct 22

Teamwork resolves responsibilities smoothly. Leadership receives appreciation. Comfort food brings delight. Siblings seek helpful advice. Review financial investments for better clarity. Productivity grows as balance strengthens your approach.

Scorpio Oct 23–Nov 22

Balanced spending supports stability. Family harmony strengthens through open dialogue. Professional progress feels promising. Singles enjoy renewed romantic energy. Your mood brightens as positive outcomes unfold naturally.

Sagittarius Nov 23–Dec 22

Work and business deliver encouraging news. Your charm attracts new connections. Romantic renewal supports emotional clarity. Motivating weather encourages gentle rest. Property choices appear favourable and aligned with your aspirations.

Capricorn Dec 23–Jan 20

Grace through forgiveness brings peace today. Family matters resolve smoothly. Check on siblings lovingly. Gratitude uplifts your heart. Beautiful alignment supports emotional balance and steady personal progress.

Aquarius Jan 21–Feb 19

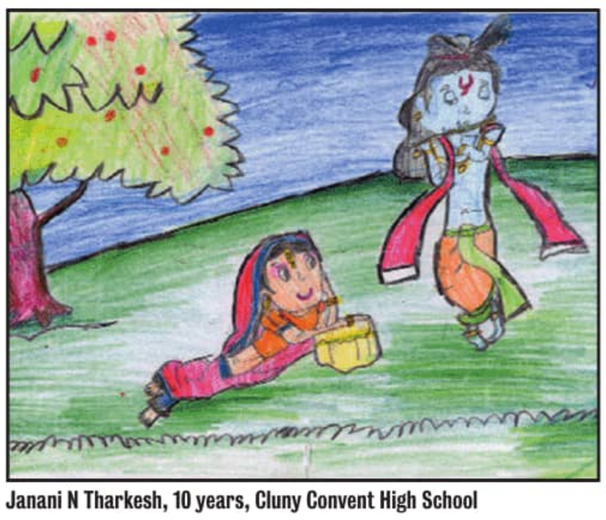
Take thoughtful steps forward today. Read signals clearly. Constructive feedback brings growth. Stay grounded in reality and trust your intuitive awareness. Balanced perception supports wise decisions and strengthened confidence.

Pisces Feb 20–Mar 20

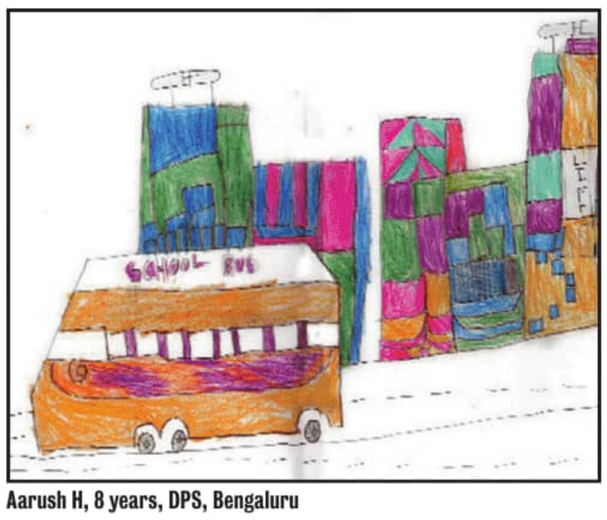
Focus brings meaningful progress. Steady eorts help important tasks move forward. Professional dedication shines. Emotional clarity encourages practical decisions. Peace grows as you commit fully to creating your brightest future.

www.sundeepkochar.com

KIDZONE



Janani N Tharkesh, 10 years, Cluny Convent High School



Aarush H, 8 years, DPS, Bengaluru

Kidzone, Bangalore Mirror, No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru–560 011; Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

SOLUTIONS

SOLVE IN 1M

$14^{-2} / 14^{-2x} = 14^{2x}$
$14^{-2} = (14^{-2x})^{2}$
Equate the exponents :
$4x = 2$
$x = 1/2$

BULL'S EYE

cent, CONNECT, note, tone

STRIKE OUT

H	A	D	R	O	N		I	B	E	R	I	A
O		E		W	A	D	D	Y		E		D
M	U	F	F	E	D		O	E	D	E	M	A
I		E		D	I	A	L	S		F		G
L	A	C	E		A	B	S		S	E	V	E
Y	E	T	I	S		R		W	I	D	E	S
	G		D	O	N	A	T	E	S		S	
J	I	B	E	D		D		B	A	I	T	S
U	S	E	R		B	E	L		L	O	S	E
D	A		E	O	S	I	N		D		A	
G	O	D	I	V	A		F	O	R	A	L	L
E		L		E	S	S	E	N		T		E
D	O	E	S	N	T		R	E	R	E	A	D

FAST FIVE

C	I	S	T	S
U	N	T	O	P
E	R	O	S	E
S	T	O	R	E
C	O	K	E	D

RIDDLER

Doc, Happy, Smelly, Sneezy, Stumpy, Sleepy, Grumpy, Dopey, Droopy, Bashful

QUICK

S	O	L	A	C	E		A	M	I	G	O	S
W	O	R	K		O	V	E	R	T	A	K	E
	G		C		V		W		L		O	
B	A	T	T	E	R	S		O	O	D	D	E	R
	B				R		S				R	
D	O	W	R	Y		P	A	R	A	P	E	T
	V		E		F		K		N			
P	E	R	V	E	R	S	E		D	O	R	Y
	P		O		E		O		H		E	
S	A	N	K	E	Y		F	O	R	B	E	S
	R		E		A		F		A		F	

QUOTE UNCODE

You can't hold a man down without staying down with him.

MENSA PUZZLE

Y. In each circle, starting with the top left letter, move 10 places forward to give the top right figure, and move another 10 places forward to give the bottom letter.

SUDOKU

9	5	3	8	7	4	1	2	6
6	8	2	9	1	3	5	4	7
7	1	4	5	6	2	8	3	9
4	3	7	2	5	6	9	8	1
1	6	8	3	4	9	2	7	5
2	9	5	7	8	1	3	6	4
8	4	6	1	3	5	7	9	2
5	7	9	4	2	8	6	1	3
3	2	1	6	9	7	4	5	8

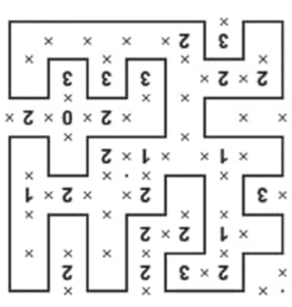
ALPHA TRIANGLE

D, AD, And, Sand, Deans, Sedans, Sundaes.

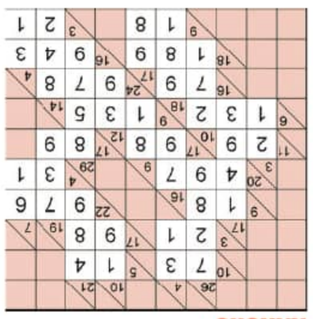
GO FIGURE

Easy
9 x 2 + 1 + 8 = 27
Medium
7 – 8 + 8 + 3 = 10
Hard
5 x 9 – 1 + 1 = 45

LOOP



KAKURO



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 # McAdams walk of fame
Rachel McAdams received her Hollywood Walk of Fame star on January 20, 2026. She thanked mentors, family, and fans while reflecting on her career and joys of parenthood

Strength over show

Tamannaah Bhatia trains smart in Spain, skipping flashy gym theatrics

Tamannaah Bhatia is not reinventing fitness while training in Spain for her upcoming film, Raid 2. That is precisely why the moment has resonated. A short workout clip circulating online shows the actor easing into controlled squats before transitioning straight into a run. No filters. No flourishes. Just movement that serves a purpose.

Shared by her trainer, Siddhartha Singh, on Instagram, the clip has drawn attention for what it leaves out as much as what it shows. There are no elaborate machines or stylised poses. The focus stays firmly on strength, balance and movement that holds up outside the gym.

Inside the Spain training session

Singh captioned the video, "Training Tamannaah Bhatia in Spain", adding, "Lower body means squats." He followed that with a practical note: "Then a piece to get ready for a run." The footage reflects that thinking. Bhatia moves with steady control through her squats, then runs alongside her trainer, keeping the session efficient and unembellished.

Speaking to The Indian Express, orthopaedic specialist Dr Anup Khatri, senior consultant at Gleneagles Hospital, said routines like this underpin daily movements people often overlook. The hips, glutes and legs, he explained, "power routine tasks like climbing stairs, carrying items and maintaining balance throughout the day." Strengthening them, he added, "helps reduce strain on the knees and lower back."

Dr Khatri said effective lower-body workouts do not require expensive equipment, noting that simple exercises and even correctly done bodyweight routines can deliver strong results, especially for beginners.

Why strength and recovery go together

Consulting dietitian and fitness expert Garima Goyal said the workout underscores the importance of compound movements that build overall strength, stability and coordination. Experts add that strong legs aid posture, balance and injury prevention, while Dr Khatri recommends lower-body training twice a week with proper warm-up, recovery and attention to pain signals.

—ETimes

SANDALWOOD SHOTS

Y MAHESWARA REDDY

Hampi excited

Director Jadesh K Hampi is excited about the release of his latest film, Landlord. It is his fourth film as a director. Prior to this, Jadesh helmed Rajahamsa, Gentleman and Guru Shishyaru. He also wrote the script for Challenging Star Darshan's film Katera, which went on to become a huge box-office success.

"I am very excited about the release of my fourth directorial on Friday. The film has all the ingredients to cater to the tastes of all types of audiences — mass as well as family viewers. Set in the 1980s, the story is rooted in Karnataka. The dialogues are laced with Kolar dialect," said Jadesh.

The director said Vijayakumar, popularly known as Duniya Vijay, and his daughter Ritanya Vijaykumar play the roles of father and daughter in the film. "I was shocked to see Ritanya's sterling performance on the sets. Her acting skills are impressive and she gets into the skin of the character. Rachita Ram is paired opposite Duniya Vijay and has also delivered a strong performance," he said.

Jadesh praised Raj B Shetty's performance as the antagonist, saying the actor brings a completely different on-screen avatar without relying on a sculpted physique. The film also stars Achyuth Kumar, Umashree and others, with music by Ajaneesh Lokanath and production by KV Satyaprakash.

Title tweak

Director Jyothi Rao Mohit has modified the title of his latest film from Amrutanjan to Amruta Anjan due to legal issues. Initially, she chose Amrutanjan as the title as she had earlier made a short film with the same name.

"I changed the title due to certain issues. The film is scheduled to release in theatres on January 30. Although it belongs to the comedy genre, it also contains emotional and sentimental elements," the director said.

An emotional song from the film was unveiled at MMB Legacy on Tuesday. "My parents are the reason behind this song. Real incidents from my childhood inspired it. My father used to torture my mother. We worked very hard on this song to ensure quality. Naveen D Padil played the father, while Madhumathi played the mother," she said.

The director warned she might stop making films if Amruta Anjan flops, adding that Jayanna Films will release it with support from a senior distributor. Gaurav Shetty plays a drunkard, noting the comedy-filled first half has been well-received, while Payal Chengappa thanked the director for the opportunity.